

Railroad Co-Operation in Southern Agricultural Development

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By
FAIRFAX HARRISON
President, Southern Railway Company



RAILROAD CO-OPERATION IN SOUTHERN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT.

The business of a railroad is the carriage of persons and property. Its first duty to the communities along its lines is to make its transportation service as efficient as may be practicable. As a business enterprise seeking increased prosperity through an enlargement of its volume of traffic it may properly supplement its service by co-operating with the people whom it serves for community development. Such activities on the part of the railroad are based on sound business principles, for while the benefits accrue primarily to the communities, the railroad is ultimately benefited by the resulting increase in travel and in freight traffic.

From the organization of the Southern Railway Company it has endeavored to be helpful in the development of the communities along its lines. Immediately after its organization its first President—Samuel Spencer—organized a Land and Industrial Department for the purpose of co-operating with communities along the company's lines for securing the location of industries and attracting to each locality the character of immigration that might be desired by the people already living there. Under the administration of the late President Finley this co-operative work was continued and its scope was greatly enlarged by the employment of experts to visit farmers along the lines of the Southern Railway Company and its associated companies and advise them as to methods of obtaining the best results in all branches of agriculture, including the raising of live stock and dairying. I am fully in accord with the enlightened policies of my distinguished predecessors with respect to this development work and it is my purpose to continue it and to give it close personal supervision.

In our co-operation with farmers we have given special attention to the territory into which the Mexican cotton boll weevil has spread, and I believe that the results have thoroughly demonstrated the value of our work. By sending among the farmers men who had had practical experience in growing cotton under boll weevil conditions and who were qualified to advise as to the best methods of combating the insect we have aided in maintaining public confidence, cotton production has been well maintained, the production of other crops has been increased, more attention has been given to live stock, and, instead of the movement

of people out of the territory and a depreciation of land values such as followed the spread of the weevil into some other localities, we have had people moving in and land values have been maintained and even advanced.

The spread of the boll weevil over the cotton belt of the Southern States is bringing about a revolution in the system of agriculture. It has long been recognized that single-crop farming could not be carried on indefinitely without soil depletion and decreased yields. It was highly desirable, therefore, in the interest of the permanent prosperity of the South, that diversified farming and crop rotation with the raising of live stock should be universally practised. The spread of the boll weevil is proving to be a powerful factor in bringing this about, for profitable farming under boll weevil conditions involves the reduction of cotton acreage to what can properly be handled under the more intensive cultural methods made necessary by the weevil and the devotion of the land thus released from cotton to other crops and to live stock. I believe that, by more intensive cultural methods and the production of larger yields per acre, the South, in spite of the boll weevil, will maintain its great economic advantage of having a substantial monopoly in producing the cotton supply of the world, and that, hand in hand with this, there will be built up a highly profitable system of diversified farming.

The cotton belt has been so long and so thoroughly identified with its predominant crop that the idea prevails quite generally in other localities, and even to some extent in the South, that other crops can not profitably be grown in the cotton belt. Nothing could be further from the truth. The same conditions of soil and climate that are necessary for cotton production are most favorable for wide diversification of crops and for live stock of all kinds. There is abundant evidence of this in the experience of progressive farmers in every part of the cotton belt. I shall cite only a few instances from the record of the past year. The Boys' Corn Clubs of the cotton belt States maintained the supremacy that they have held ever since the inception of these clubs. The first prize for the United States was won by an Alabama boy with the phenomenal record of 232.7 bushels on a single acre while the prize winning boys in each of the States of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Tennessee exceeded the highest yield made by any boy in any Northern or Western State. Equally remarkable was the record made by the Girls' Tomato Clubs of the cotton

belt States, headed by a Georgia girl, who grew 5,354 pounds of tomatoes on a tenth of an acre, surpassing by 1,374 pounds the highest record made by any girl in the Northern or Western States. Though not generally looked upon as a live stock region, the mild winters and long grazing seasons of that part of the cotton belt east of the Mississippi River, give it advantages for all branches of the live stock industry which are unsurpassed by any other part of the country, and it was a revelation to the live stock men of the United States when the cotton States carried off a large number of premiums at the International Live Stock Show of 1913, including the grand championship, awarded to a Hereford bull bred in a cotton State and now owned in Mississippi, and the first prize for Shorthorn calves awarded to animals bred and owned in a cotton producing county in Tennessee. That the South can not only produce live stock of the best quality, but can do it profitably has been testified to by such a highly qualified and impartial authority as Dr. Rommel, Chief of the Division of Animal Husbandry in the United States Agricultural Department, who, in speaking of the experimental work carried on by the Department in the State of Alabama, recently told the Agricultural Committee of the House of Representatives that—

“The work in Alabama has demonstrated one important fact—that the South for a long period is to be our principal source of cheap beef. No Northern farmer, or any other farmer, can raise beef at less than 5 cents a pound, but we have done, and are doing, that in Alabama. * * * We have not finished the figures on the cost of raising pork, but we have fattened pigs down there at a cost of less than 2 cents a pound of gain on peanuts and grain. Of course, that is exceptional, but the cost will run from 2½ to 3 cents.”

The year 1913 was one of great prosperity for Southern farmers. Statistics recently issued by the United States Agricultural Department covering the production of cotton, corn, wheat, oats, rye, barley, hay, tobacco, potatoes, sweet potatoes, buckwheat, and rice show that the total estimated value of these crops in the nine Southern States traversed by the Southern Railway in 1913 was \$1,139,998,000, an increase of approximately \$156,000,000 over 1912, as compared with an increase of barely \$60,000,000 for all of the other States. It may be a revelation to those who think of the Southern States as producing little but cotton

to know that Alabama last year, in addition to growing 1,510,000 bales of cotton valued at \$91,704,000, also produced 55,360,000 bushels of corn, 5,200,000 bushels of oats, and sufficient other grains, hay, tobacco, potatoes, and sweet potatoes to bring the total value for the State up to \$156,946,000, an increase over 1912 of more than \$22,000,000. The values I have stated do not take into account large quantities of fruits and other vegetables produced in the South. If statistics for all of these crops were available they would increase substantially the total for our section.

I have referred to the co-operation of the Southern Railway Company with communities to secure the location of desirable immigrants and I am glad to be able to say that there is a substantial movement of farm settlers from other parts of the United States into Alabama and the other States traversed by our lines. For some years after the war between the States, owing to conditions which prevailed in the South and to the opportunities for obtaining cheap lands in the West, there was little movement of outside population into the Southern States east of the Mississippi River, but there was quite a large movement from our section to other parts of the United States. The results of this are seen in the reports of the United States census of 1910 which show that, at that time, 2,571,734 natives of the nine Southeastern States traversed by the Southern Railway lines were living in other States while only 472,412 natives of other States were living in these nine States. In other words, the net loss of population to this section through the movement to other States was, on its face, 2,199,322, or approximately 61,000 more than the total population of the State of Alabama in 1910. The real loss was, of course, much larger because the census figures do not include the children born to Southern parents after their removal. In addition to this there has been a considerable movement into Canada. In the period between July 1, 1904, and October 1, 1913, this amounted to 4,608.

The lure of free homesteads and cheap lands in the West no longer exists, for, taking into account productive value and market advantages, there are no cheaper lands in the United States than can be found south of the Potomac and Ohio Rivers and east of the Mississippi, and I believe that we have entered upon an era in which the movement into this section will be much larger than the outward movement.

In this connection, I would like to impress upon the Southern people my conviction that keeping our own people at home is even

more important to our progress than attracting settlers from other localities. I am sure that I speak for you when I say that we will welcome the desirable immigrant from any other part of our own country or from Europe; that we will make him one of us; that we will undertake to teach him our language and imbue him with our aspirations; but it is fair to add that we can best insure the preservation of the ideals and traditions of the South and the advancement of our prosperity if, in addition to welcoming the stranger, we keep our own people at home. This is a matter that is having the attention of the Southern Railway Company. Through our Land and Industrial Department and all of our agencies working for Southern development we are seeking to impress upon the people along our lines the superiority of our own section and, so far as we are able to do so, we endeavor to persuade individuals contemplating removing to other parts of the country to remain in the South. This is a matter in which every Southern man can help. It requires no organization, but each one who knows of a neighbor who is thinking of leaving, can endeavor to persuade him to remain, and, if our Land and Industrial Department is advised of cases of this kind, we will endeavor, through correspondence or a personal interview, to convince the man who is thinking of leaving that it is to his advantage to remain in the South.

Great as has been the progress of the South, we have only fairly begun to realize our opportunities for agricultural and industrial development. The rapid progress being made by Southern farmers in the adoption of improved farming methods will greatly increase our steadily growing agricultural output. The economic law tending to the location of manufacturing enterprises in proximity to supplies of raw material and to power resources and the advantages of home markets based on a prosperous and increasing agricultural population will stimulate the development of diversified manufacturing in all of the Southern States. I can assure you, as representatives of the progressive and enterprising people of the South, that in this forward movement you will have the continued co-operation of the Southern Railway Company.

